



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith, 4-1 Inf. Public Affairs)

## Changeover!

Col. Ricky D. Gibbs, left, commander of the 4th Inf. BCT, 1st Inf. Div., and Command Sgt. Maj. Jim Champagne, the brigade command sergeant major, unfurl the unit's colors during the Transfer of Authority ceremony, at FOB Camp Falcon, Iraq March 8. The Dragon Brigade took over responsibility for Baghdad's Rashid security district from 2nd BCT, 1st Cav. Div. (See Story Page 2)

## Another step forward in plan for Baghdad

By Pfc. Benjamin Gable  
7th MPAD

BAGHDAD - The implementation of the new security plan for the Iraqi capital took another step as Iraqi and Multi-National Division - Baghdad forces entered the eastern district of Sadr City March 4.

Soldiers from 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, 3rd Stryker Brigade Combat Team, 2nd Infantry Division conducted security operations and spoke with

locals to gather information while Iraqi Army troops searched and cleared houses in the section of Sadr City known as "Thawra 2."

"I believe the Strykers were used because of their robust firepower and our experience in the area," said 1st Lt. Jacob Czekanski, a Silver Creek, Mich. native serving with the Company B "Blackhawks," 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment. "There is a definite psychological impact when we are on the ground."

The overall objective was to clear and

hold the areas while the new joint security station, or JSS, continues construction. The JSS will house coalition and Iraqi security forces and will persist in providing security for Thawra 2.

"This was the [Iraqi's] mission, we were just there to give support and provide quality control for them," said Czekanski.

The two-day mission began in the morning March 4 with a meeting of both U.S. and Iraqi commanders on the ground

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# Fort Riley-based troops settle into Iraqi capital

By Pfc. Nathaniel Smith  
4-1 Inf. Public Affairs

FORWARD OPERATING BASE FALCON, Iraq -- The 4th Infantry Brigade Combat Team, 1st Infantry Division officially took over for the 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division in a transfer of authority ceremony here March 8.

Col. Ricky Gibbs, the commander of the 4th BCT "Dragons," hailed his Soldiers' preparation for their mission.

"You have trained hard the past 18 months standing up this great brigade," Gibbs said. "You are well-trained, well-led and combat ready."

"I ask you to never lose sight of your principle objectives: protect the peace-loving people of Iraq and destroy the thugs and criminals who terrorize this country."

Cpl. Ed Herring, a team leader from 1st Battalion, 28th Infantry Regiment, 4th IBCT,



(Photo by Pfc. Nathaniel Smith 4-1 Inf. Public Affairs)

**Lt. Col. Robert Weaver, commander 610th B, and Command Sgt. Fields III, battalion command sergeant major, uncasing the unit's colors during the 4th Inf. BCT Transfer of Authority ceremony March 8 at FOB Falcon, Iraq.**

said Multi-National Division-Baghdad troops are fighting for a good cause.

"I'm a true believer that if you can help someone you really should go out of your way to do it," he said. "I believe the United States has the capability

to do that, to help these people have a better life for themselves."

Part of that better life, Herring said, is the freedom of democracy and safety within their neighborhoods.

With that thought in mind,

the Greeley, Colo., native said the unit has been preparing for everything.

"Anything they can throw at us, we want to be able to have it already in the back of our minds exactly how we're going to respond to those problems," he said.

The Dragons' commander had advice for his troops as they set out to provide that better life for the Iraqi citizens of Baghdad's Rashid security district.

"Fear nothing, trust your God-given instincts, know the capabilities of your men and your unit," he said, "and never ever underestimate our enemy or the depths to which he will stoop to achieve his objectives."

"I have total trust and confidence in each and every one of you, and know we will be victorious on the battlefield."

The Dragons have been in Iraq since mid-February. The unit activated in January 2006.

## Arabic Phrase of the Day

*akil*

**Defined:  
food**

## Iraq 3-Day Weather Report



Today

High: 76  
Low: 48



Tomorrow

High: 78  
Low: 51



Sunday

High: 80  
Low: 52

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(Photo by Pfc. Benjamin Gable 7th MPAD)

**1st Lt. Jacob Czekanski, (second from right) with Company B, 1st Battalion, 23rd Infantry Regiment, meets with an Iraqi leader and interpreter in Baghdad's Sadr City district March 5 before clearing houses and speaking with locals to better understand the security situation in the area.**

## Security mission in Sadr City

### Plan

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in Sadr City, where final plans were made. Coalition forces linked up with the Iraqi security forces and began the search.

"It's important that the locals here see their own people taking command," said Spc. Kevin Flannery, an infantryman with Company B. "We are only here to give help, if needed."

As Soldiers provided security, the Iraqi troops made their way through the area searching houses for weapons caches and intelligence. They also questioned the tenants of the homes concerning insurgent activities. After each house was searched, the head of the house was asked to sign documentation stating nothing was broken or stolen from the premises by coalition forces.

While the Iraqi security forces were searching and clearing houses, U.S. Soldiers provided security and spoke with locals regarding the state of affairs on the ground. Soldiers spoke with locals, both

young and old, in an attempt to better understand how the neighborhood is dealing with illegal activities.

After a quick and thorough search of Thawra 2, the first day ended as troops headed back to their base camps.

"This is a very motivated group and they are on track with operations in the city," said Czekanski.

Day two picked up where the previous day left off.

Coalition forces were well received and, in some instances, were invited to enter the homes of some residents.

A number of Soldiers conversed with residents over chai, a type of hot tea favored by Iraqis, and were praised for helping the Iraqis take control of the security situation.

The second day ended just as the first - as Iraqi and U.S. troops finished clearing their assigned sectors.

"The [Iraqi Army] is on the right track and we are moving in the right direction," said Spc. Jacob Zamft, an infantryman with Company B.

## Baghdad in Brief

### Civil affairs team, 'Allons' battalion aid wounded pilgrim

MAHMUDIYAH, Iraq - Iraqi police brought an injured woman traveling to the holy sites during Arbaeen to a civil affairs team inspecting a hospital here Mar. 7.

The Soldiers, of the 413th Civil Affairs Battalion, were checking up on the facilities at the Mahmudiyah Hospital when a patrol of Iraqi police brought a local woman with a gunshot wound to the chest in for treatment.

The woman said she had been shot by a sniper who was apparently targeting people walking south in the village of Dora.

The hospital did not have the capability to treat the woman, and the civil affairs team contacted the 2nd "Allons" Battalion, 15th Field Artillery Regiment, 2nd Brigade Combat Team, 10th Mountain Division (Light Infantry), based at the nearby Forward Operating Base Mahmudiyah.

Soldiers from 2-15th requested air medical evacuation for the woman, who was taken to the 28th Combat Support Hospital in Baghdad. She is currently undergoing treatment for her wound.

Many roads in the 2nd BCT's area of operation are filled with pilgrims traveling south to the shrines at Karbala for the Shia Muslim commemoration of Arbaeen - the martyrdom of Husayn bin Ali.



# Keeping things light in a heavily armored vehicle

By Sgt. Armando Monroig  
5th MPAD

MUQDADIYAH, Iraq - For many Soldiers, a deployment can be a heavy burden to bear. Long hours, firefights and being away from loved ones are just some of the challenges faced by Soldiers in Iraq.

Staff Sgt. Jerry McCloud and his Bradley Fighting Vehicle crew know this well and have decided that keeping things light is what will help them make it through their deployment.

McCloud and crew are assigned to Troop A, 6th Squadron, 9th Cavalry Regiment, 3rd Brigade Combat Team, 1st Cavalry Division. Their job consists of route clearance, patrols and security operations, said the 38-year-old vehicle commander.

A reconnaissance mission Feb. 17, took them to the hills of nearby Hamrin, Iraq, marking their 109th mission since arriving in Diyala in October.

As the senior Soldier in the vehicle, McCloud said he is not only responsible for the safety of his Soldiers, but also making sure they cope with the day-to-day stress that comes with combat missions.

"It's stressful, but the less stress I inflict on them, the better they perform," said McCloud, from Tulsa, Okla.

To do that, McCloud keeps things lighthearted and playful. He jokes around with his crew.

They sing songs from shows like Sesame Street and mimic the characters. His Soldiers call him daddy in jest, and he takes care of them as if they were his own kids.

"The more relaxed you are, the better you do your job," added McCloud, a 20-year Army veteran.

He said the Fort Hood, Texas crew eventually developed a good working relationship. But it wasn't always the case.

"When we first got together, we were a terrible crew," Sgt. John Richter, Bradley gunner, from Lynnville, Ind.

He said initially they had a hard time building cohesion and weren't used to working together.

"After a while, you learn the rhythm or pattern of what the other people want and things fall into place," he said.

"It takes time. You can't just throw a crew together. It takes baby steps. How



(Photo by Sgt. Armando Monroig 5th MPAD)

**Staff Sgt. Jerry McCloud peers out the turret of his Bradley Fighting Vehicle during a reconnaissance mission to Hamrin, Iraq, Feb. 17.**

long have I been tortured by you all?" McCloud asked his Soldiers.

"About a year-and-a-half," Richter said with a grin. He is on his second Iraq rotation. His first deployment was in 2004.

The crew agreed that going through combat on a daily basis together has helped them form a strong bond. They recalled the first time their Bradley Fighting Vehicle was hit by a road-side bomb only three weeks after arriving in Iraq.

It was the worst roadside bomb they had encountered, said McCloud, who is in Iraq a second time as well. His first time here was in 1991 during Operation Desert Storm.

This Bradley crew has been hit by road-side bombs seven times.

They keep things lighthearted despite the dangerous missions because it's what helps them stay alert and calm in stressful situations.

"You expect it. You're prepared. But you laugh about it. You continue the mission and you expect it to happen again," said McCloud.

The two experienced Soldiers, McCloud and Richter, do what they can to train Flanary, who is on his first deployment, and help improve his driving skills.

"I've learned to ... maintain my distance, and to stay calm and not get too excited," said Flanary.

"He's come a long way," said McCloud.

"He's a little hesitant to think on his own, but as long as he doesn't run over any people or trucks - we're good."

Flanary and Richter attribute their "dad's" leadership skills and good training to their improved performance.

McCloud has helped Richter become one of the best gunners in the squadron. Richter is one of only three Soldiers out of 40 in the squadron to get a perfect score in accomplishing 10 gunners tasks successfully.

Although McCloud likes to joke around, his Soldiers know that when it comes down to it, he's all business.

"He gets down and dirty, leads by example, works right there beside us," said Flanary. "That's why I respect him. He's a good listener and a good teacher."

"He's a mentor, a tutor. He has a great work ethic. The Army is running out of Soldiers like him. He stands up for us. That's why I call him daddy," said Richter smiling at his NCO.

"They're a pain, but I have a good crew," he said as he glared at his protégés.

"I've got a sense of pride for my crew," said Richter.

"Working with them makes my job easier. They help me laugh off the hardships of combat," he said.



# Colin Farrell should never grow a Fu Manchu

By Pfc. William Hatton  
7th MPAD

What has happened to originality? Do movie producers have a hat full of old TV shows written on slips of paper and randomly pick one to be made into a movie? From Charlie's Angels to Starsky and Hutch, where does it end?

I watched Miami Vice (the movie) recently and during the movie I thought to myself, "How did this movie even get made?" Now, I can't say I was a diehard-fan of the show while it aired on TV, nor can I say I even watched it. I'm sure there are some diehard fans that thought the making of Miami Vice (the movie) would be awesome.

This movie was all around horrible. Everything from an extremely weak plot to bad acting made this movie atrocious.

What got me even more than the pathetic story line was Collin Farrell's

## DVD Hunt

Pfc. William  
Hatton



ridiculous Fu Manchu and awful tough-guy accent. I think he tried over-playing the macho role because he's probably still trying to live down his role as Alexander the Great.

Miami Vice (the movie) is about a team of undercover police officers, lead by detective James "Sonny" Crockett, played by Farrell (S.W.A.T., Alexander), and detective Ricardo "Rico" Tubbs, played by Jamie Foxx (Ray, Collateral). After a drug bust goes bad due to an informant in the FBI, the team is sent to find how deep the corruption goes. The team proceeds to

uncover a drug organization in Columbia with incredible connections and technology.

I don't want to give too much away in saying what the movie is about, but let me just say whoever wrote it did a poor job from beginning to end. I constantly asked myself what was going on as the movie jumped from scene to scene. I questioned if it was over when the end credits started to role.

Now, I can understand if a movie tries to add a bit of cleverness and ingenuity, but to start introducing multiple factors that don't add up is a good way to make an awful movie. Basically, if you're considering wasting two-and-a-half hours of your life, check this movie out, but if you're sensible, stay away from Miami Vice. I give this movie one-and-a-half Golden Spurs.



Photo courtesy of Universal Studios'

Colin Farrell and Jamie Foxx in Universal Studios' Miami Vice